

THE
MUNICIPAL
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STRANGE PETS

AND

Other Memories
of Country Life

BY

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OF CASTLE O'ER

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MCMV
Hand

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the mother had time to recover from her fright, caused by the sudden invasion of her den by a man with a lighted candle in his hand, Cocksedge quickly seized the cubs and retreated safely from the cage as fast as he could. It would have been a different matter if he had lingered long enough to allow the beast to get over her sudden panic.

Another of Mr Bartlett's stories was about a rhinoceros; but before repeating it I may explain that the

**Sawing off
the horn of
a rhinoceros.**

"horn" of these animals is not a horn in the usual acceptation of the word, as, instead of being composed of the osseous matter forming the horns of other animals, it is entirely composed of hair, or a hair-like substance, cemented together by a glutinous matter, and in time this becomes very hard and heavy, and to a casual observer has all the appearance of a horn proper. The animal referred to had, by knocking its head against the bars of its cage, managed to distort its horn until, instead of growing outwards with an upward bend, it grew downwards right over its mouth, and so prevented it either from eating or drinking. In order to save the animal's life, it was resolved to remove the obstruction. To do so was a difficult and dangerous operation. Not many men, I fancy, are as courageous as Cocksedge, and possibly the keeper of a rhinoceros with a tetchy temper would hesitate before entering its cage and attempting to cut off its horn straight away.

The only expedient open to Mr Bartlett's mind was to saw the horn off; but as the animal had a very bad temper, and resented any liberties being taken with it, he did not very well see how he was

to attain his object. However, after thinking the matter over, he arranged his plan.

I think he told me it took many days of preparation before the operation could be performed. He began by coaxing the beast near enough the front of the cage to allow its horn to protrude through the bars. He then for some days stroked the horn with his hand, which the animal resented at first, but gradually became used to. When it found that Mr Bartlett meant no harm it allowed him to take the horn in his left hand, and with the forefinger of his right to imitate the motion of a saw by drawing it backwards and forwards across the spot where the incision was to be made. After this manœuvre was carried on for a certain time he used a piece of wood in the same way as his finger, and when he thought the big beast had become sufficiently familiarised with this sort of manipulation, he used the saw with perfect success, and the animal's life was saved, so the time taken up by the preparation was not thrown away. After many stories of the same interesting kind we retired to rest.

Next day we drove out to inspect the river, and on our way we saw a brindled collie dog, when Mr

Brindled collie. Bartlett told us something that neither I nor Buckland knew before—viz., that a

dog so coloured had generally, if not always, one eye brown and the other white.

Many people may not know that a black sheep has the whole inside of its mouth and tongue as black as its wool. Being accustomed to handle sheep, I had long known this fact, though Mr Bartlett did not, so we gave each other a lesson in natural history.

The public, of course, recollecting that they could see a living elephant almost every day, flocked to see the dead one, and during the fair time Atkins' concern was nearly deserted. Mr Wombwell was extremely enterprising. He purchased for his collection the first rhinoceros ever imported into this country, and also the first pair of giraffes. For the latter he paid £1800, and he ordered a special carriage to be built for their exhibition, but before it could be finished his costly purchases died. A short time after he bought a lot of four giraffes, for which he paid £2000, but all of them died within four months. It is said that, by disease and death, Mr Wombwell lost during his career animals to the value of £15,000. His ambition was to possess the largest and best travelling menagerie in the world, and as he had realised a handsome fortune he spared no expense in acquiring new or rare animals. In 1825 Mr Wombwell revived at Warwick the sport of lion-and-dog-fighting, which had been the favourite amusement of James I. and his courtiers in the Tower. This circumstance at the time created considerable excitement and comment; but as erroneous versions of the affair have been published, it may be well to give the authentic narrative as related by the late Mr Wombwell. Some gentlemen in Warwick who possessed several celebrated bull-dogs which had distinguished themselves in bull-baiting, offered to wager that their dogs could successfully fight two lions which Mr Wombwell then possessed. Mr Wombwell accepted the wager, and the dogs were sent into the den with the lion called 'Nero.' This animal, it must be remembered, was very tame, and indeed so lamb-like in temper was he that the public were allowed, on payment of

twopence, to enter his den and get a ride on his back,—a privilege of which large numbers daily took advantage. Well 'Nero,' when he saw the bull-dogs enter his den, slunk away to a corner, and would not be tempted to fight. The dogs were then drawn and placed in the den of the second lion, called 'Wallace.' In this lion the dogs found a different customer to deal with, and in a short time the six famed bull-dogs were successively killed. Such an exhibition would not now be tolerated; but it must be remembered that in 1825 bull-baiting, badger-drawing, and cock-fighting were common sports of the people. The only other great event in the seventy years' history of the menagerie was the death of the Lion Queen in Chatham about 1851. The Lion Queen was a niece of Mr Wombwell, and had been accustomed to the animals all her life. Yielding to the injudicious solicitations of some visitors, she one day went into a tiger's den when the animals were excited by feeding. The tiger sprung at the poor girl and seized her by the neck, but immediately let her go. When taken out of the cage the Lion Queen was dead, although it was said to have been more from sheer fright than from actual injuries caused by the tiger. Mr Wombwell was himself a man of indomitable will and great courage. He thought nothing of entering the den of the most ferocious beast; and he invariably, when any of his animals were sick, got beside them and administered with his own hands his unfailing remedy—a dose of castor-oil. In two articles of dress he was particular almost to eccentricity. He would only wear the finest linen ruffled shirts, and he would never put on a pair of mended boots. His boots at all times had to be kept scrupulously clean, but of the remainder

of his wearing apparel he was absolutely careless, and we have been assured on the best authority that at his death it was not worth more than five shillings. He was married, but never had any family. Mrs Wombwell managed the financial affairs of the concern, and there was one stretch of twenty years during which that good lady never was away from or slept out of the menagerie. Mr Wombwell had a real love for the showman's hard but free life; and although he had long realised a handsome fortune he refused to retire, and at last he died in the living caravan of the show in Northallerton in November 1850, at the age of seventy-three years. Mrs Wombwell carried on No. 1 collection, and he left No. 2 and No. 3 respectively to his niece and nephew. On the 1st January 1866 Mrs Wombwell handed over her menagerie to her nephew and niece, Mr and Mrs Alexander Fairgrieve, Edinburgh, by whom it was conducted till its dispersal yesterday. Under its later proprietorship the collection lost none of its reputation—the beauty, variety, and number of the specimens being invariably maintained; and it may be mentioned as an interesting fact that almost every animal exhibited, except the elephant and rhinoceros, was bred within the show. In the course of its existence the menagerie was four times patronised by the Royal family.

"A sale of wild beasts is an event so novel and out of the way that it excited considerable attention, not only in Edinburgh, but all over the country. The day was fortunately fine and bright, and a large crowd collected early in the forenoon in the Waverley Market to witness the elephants and camels take their last constitutional walk as belonging to Wombwell's menagerie. The pavilion itself was, despite the

half-crown charge, well filled long before the hour announced for the commencement of the sale, and in the afternoon it was quite crowded by an assemblage of all classes, who watched the proceedings with great interest. Considering the class of animals to be disposed of, buyers were numerous, and from various and distant quarters. Perhaps the most prominent was Mr Jamrach, the most extensive dealer in wild animals in the world; while next to him was a quiet modest-looking gentleman, who turned out to be the great Jamrach's almost equally great rival, Mr Rice. Then there was Mr Wm. Cross, the well-known naturalist and animal dealer, from Liverpool, who was a spirited bidder; Mr Ferguson, the representative of the famous Van Amburgh, who has now three menageries in America; Mr Jennison, proprietor of the Bellevue Gardens, Manchester; Mr Jackson, of the Zoological Gardens, Bristol; Professor Edwards, *Jardin des Plantes*, Paris; and a number of proprietors of travelling collections. Exactly at a quarter-past twelve Mr Buist ascended his rostrum and announced the conditions of the roup, which was to be without reserve. A commencement was made with the monkeys, which were recommended as pets for the drawing-room and for the kitchen, as lively, frisky, intelligent, cleanly, beautiful, and half able to speak. For some of the rarer species competition was brisk, and the mandril and anubis baboon ran up to £30 and £10, 10s. respectively. The knight of the hammer capped the whole of the many clever things he has done by selling the devil for sixty-five shillings; and his Tasmanian majesty will now be confined to Mrs Day's peripatetic establishment. An interesting, and, on the whole, a very beautiful lot were the birds. The black vulture took

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precedence of the rest of the feathered tribe, and bids being scarce, bidders were assured with all confidence that he was worth a guinea for his plumage and a sovereign to eat afterwards,—to those who cared for roast vulture. He was acquired, we dare say scarcely for these purposes, by the London dealer for £3, 10s. The oldest inhabitant in the establishment was the condor, who had been attached to Wombwell's Menagerie for forty years, and despite his age he fetched £15. It was suggested that some gentleman should try ostrich-feather farming in this country by an investment in the emu, but no one seemed enterprising enough to desire the sight of a five or six feet bird looking into his breakfast-room in the morning asking for a picking; so Mrs Day picked him up for £7. The brace of pelicans which used to amuse the children by racing for fish, and which were bought at the late Earl of Derby's sale, were secured by Mr Jamrach at £6, 15s. each. The parrots and cockatoos provoked lively competition, and the majority of them were purchased by local fanciers. One beautiful lemon-crested cockatoo ran up to £8, but this enhanced price was due to his excellent talking abilities. The ocelot was recommended to the attention of small show-keepers on the ground that 'he had all the beauty of the tiger and leopard, could be bought for an old song, and made a capital subject for a magnificent large picture for the outside of the show.' Such a rare acquisition for a 'sell' was, with evident propriety, bought by Van Amburgh, the prince of Yankee menagerists, at £6, 10s. The same gentleman secured three fretful porcupines 'in fine plumage,' which, it was said, would entitle the purchaser to quote Shakespeare every morning at breakfast. It was jocularly

said that a well-known Edinburgh hairdresser desired much to make an investment in the bears, but Professor Edwards was more anxious to restock the *Jardin des Plantes*, despoiled of its magnificent collection during the siege of Paris, and he secured the Polar bear for £40, while the Thibetan Sun and the brown bears were sold respectively to Mr Jamrach and Mr Bostock for £5, 5s. and £7. Three performing leopards, beautiful glossy lithe animals, were purchased by Mr Jamrach for £60; and the same gentleman secured the magnificent performing tigress 'Tippoo' for £155. The companion of the latter, and a more valuable, though scarcely a more beautiful animal, named 'Poonah,' was seized with cold last week and died. Mr Rice, London, was the largest purchaser of this class of animals. He secured the lion 'Wallace,' with which Lorenzo used to perform 'Androcles and the Lion,' for £85; the three-year-old 'Duke of Edinburgh' for £140; a pair of lionesses, three and a half years old, 'Princess' and 'Alexandra,' at £80 each; 'Nero,' seven and a half years old, at £140; and a pair of eighteen months old lions, 'Prince Arthur' and 'Prince Alfred,' at £90 each. Mr Rice also purchased a zebra at £50; the young organ-grinding and whistling elephant at £145; and a male dromedary at £30. When 'Boss,' a three-year-old lion, was put up, and there were no bids beyond £10, he of the hammer said that at that figure it would be a good investment for an Edinburgh shopkeeper to put in his window or at his shop door. The lion had hurt his eye on the bars of his cage, and only brought £20. The black-maned lion 'Hannibal,' six and a half years old, said to be the finest and largest in Britain, was started at £50, and the bidding was comparatively slow

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for a time. On reaching £225, Mr Buist said he was ashamed of such a ridiculously small price being offered for the finest lion in the world, and he was sure that 'Hannibal' was as disgusted as he was, and would turn his back on the crowd. Sure enough, the animal did at that moment deliberately turn round, and the amusing episode created some liveliness in the bidding. 'Hannibal' was eventually knocked down for £270, to be sent to the Zoological Gardens in Bristol. Competition for the large performing elephant was limited, and this was the only animal which was sold much below its value. For a time the bidding rested at £380, till a suggestion was made that a prominent butcher should invest and introduce a new elephant sausage. The vision of mammoth sausages quickened the offers, and at last, by dint of perseverance, the figure reached was £680, at which price Mr Jennison secured it for Bellevue Gardens. The small musical elephant, which, as before stated, sold for £145, not to make minced collops, was bought by Mr Fairgrieve from the gentleman who yesterday repurchased her, at something like £600. The camels and dromedaries were an interesting lot, and realised prices ranging from £14 to £30. Dr M'Kendrick bought the baby camel at £9, 10s. The total amount realised for the animals was about £2900. On the whole, the sale, according to good judges, was an excellent one. Many of the animals drew more than their market value, and others perhaps below it, but the prices ranged good throughout. The material of the menagerie, including waggons, &c., will be sold to-day. The following are details of the prices: Racoons (*Procyon lotor*)—Earl of Rosebery, 20s.; Agouti (*Dasyprocta Agouti*)—Mr Bell, Billholm, Langholm, 10s.; do., Mr Bell, 10s.; &c., &c.